decades, the ECL's equity has been fully eroded and therefore in pursuance of the statutory provisions in the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985, ECL had no other option but to refer itself to the BIFR on 17.11.99.

The resolution passed by the Board of Directors of ECL in their meeting held on 24.10.98 for closure of highly loss-making 64 mines of the company has not yet been implemented. Several milder opinions for revival of ECL have been offered to the trade unions who have not accepted any one of them. The last of the revival packages including early retirement of 22,000 employees above 55 years of age under an arrangement similar to the Voluntary Retirement Scheme has also been turned down by the trade unions. No package for revival of ECL can be implemented without a reasonable extent of downsizing the manpower of the company.

Casual workers in MCL

254. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of state for MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of causal workers in different coal fields under Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd.,

(b) since when they are working as casual workers;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to make them regular; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) As reported by Coal India Limited, no casual worker has been employed in the coalfields under Mahanadi Coalfields Limited.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of reply given to part (a) above

Jobs for land losers under MCL

255. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of State for MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd. stopped giving job to the land losers under its various coal fields;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the number and details of people waiting for job against the provision for providing employment to the land oustees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has not stopped giving jobs to the land losers.

(b) Does not arise in view of reply given to (a) above.

(c) As reporterd by Coal India Limited, 97 cases are under process for giving employment to the land losers. Details are as under:—

Name of the Coalfields	No. of cases pending
Talcher Coalfield	48
IB Valley Coalfield	49
Total	97

Fire in Coal Mines

256. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) the total quantum of coal destroyed annually during last three years, due to fire;

(b) whether there has been an increase in the incidents of fire in some coal mines;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details of various steps taken to extinguish fire and to prevent the coal mines from fire incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) Fires in coal mines below ground are dealt with by cutting off the oxygen supply by isolation stoppings and muti-filling and dozing surface area above the fire zones. Based on the analysis of the atmosphere behind the isolation stoppings when it is ascertained that the fire has died out, the area is re-opened and the coal is recovered. The amount of coal destroyed in coal fires during the last three years in negligible.

(b) No Sir.